EA Form R 1/2007

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Water Resources Division
Water Rights Bureau

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
For Routine Actions with Limited Environmental Impact

Part I. Proposed Action Description

1. Applicant/Contact name and address:

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2. Type of action: Permit Registration for Groundwater Use Within the National Park Service Compact Area No. 76I 30158178

3. Water source name: Groundwater

4. Location affected by project: Government Lot 3, SWSWNE Section 11, Township 33N, Range 18W, Flathead County, Montana.

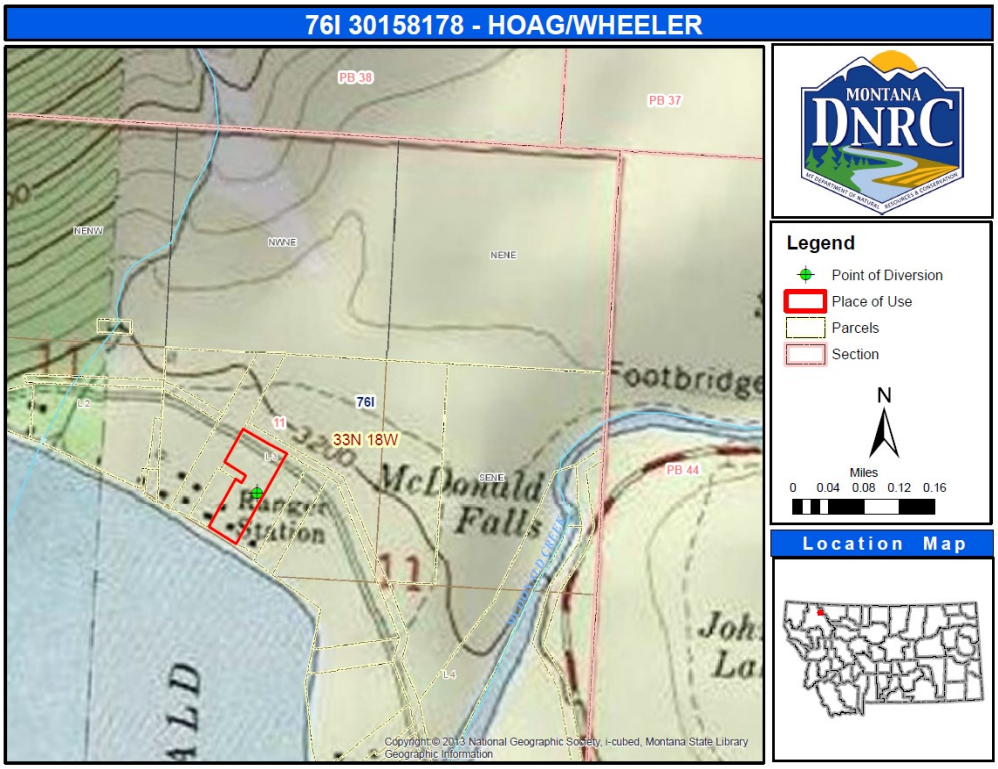

Figure 1. Map of the proposed place of use and point of diversion.

5. Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits:

This application is to obtain a water use permit for a well located within the Glacier National Park Compact Area. The Applicant proposes to divert water at a rate of 35.0 gallons per minute (GPM) up to 2.79 acre-feet (AF) per year. The proposed appropriation is for domestic use from April 1 – November 30, and lawn and garden irrigation and stock use from April 1 to October 31 annually. The point of diversion and place of use is in Government Lot 3, SWSWNE Section 11, Township 33N, Range 18W, Flathead County, Montana (Figure 1) in the Middle Fork Flathead River Basin (76I).

The DNRC shall issue a water use permit if the Applicant proves the criteria in 85-20-401 MCA are met.

6. Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS): National Wetlands Inventory Wetlands Mapper
- Montana Natural Heritage Program: Endangered, Threatened Species, and Species of Special Concern
- Montana Department of Fish Wildlife & Parks (DFWP): Dewatered Stream Information
- Montana Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ): Clean Water Act Information Center
- U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS): Web Soil Survey
- U.S. National Park Service (NPS) Water Rights Branch

Part II. Environmental Review

1. Environmental Impact Checklist:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

WATER QUANTITY, QUALITY AND DISTRIBUTION

Water quantity **-** *Assess whether the source of supply is identified as a chronically or periodically dewatered stream by DFWP. Assess whether the proposed use will worsen the already dewatered condition.*

The Applicant proposes to divert groundwater from a well that is approximately 300-feet north of McDonald Creek (Lake McDonald), a tributary of the Middle Fork Flathead River, and approximately 12 stream-miles upstream of the confluence of McDonald Creek with the Middle Fork Flathead River. Neither the Middle Fork Flathead River nor McDonald Creek are identified by the DFWP as a chronically or periodically dewatered stream.

Determination: No significant impact.

Water quality **-** *Assess whether the stream is listed as water quality impaired or threatened by DEQ, and whether the proposed project will affect water quality.*

The Applicant proposes to divert and use groundwater. The reach of the Middle Fork Flathead River which may be depleted by groundwater pumping is listed as fully supporting for all beneficial uses for which it has been assessed. It is not anticipated that pumping of the Applicant's groundwater well will have any negative impacts on the water quality of the Middle Fork Flathead River.

Determination: No significant impact.

Groundwater **-** *Assess if the proposed project impacts ground water quality or supply. If this is a groundwater appropriation, assess if it could impact adjacent surface water flows.*

The Applicant will divert groundwater from the aquifer at a rate of 35.0 GPM. The well was constructed in the 1940s and the owner estimates it to be 60-feet deep. The well is approximately 300-feet north of McDonald Creek (Lake McDonald), a tributary of the Middle Fork Flathead River, and approximately 12 stream-miles upstream of the confluence of McDonald Creek with the Middle Fork Flathead River. The NPS did not object to this application, therefore the flow rate will not be included in the calculation of total consumptive use for the North Fork Flathead River per the Glacier National Park Compact.

Determination: No significant impact.

DIVERSION WORKS - *Assess whether the means of diversion, construction and operation of the appropriation works of the proposed project will impact any of the following: channel impacts, flow modifications, barriers, riparian areas, dams, well construction.*

The means of diversion (well) has already been constructed. Since this is a groundwater appropriation, there will be no channel impacts, flow modifications, barriers, dams, or riparian impacts to McDonald Creek (Lake McDonald) or the Middle Fork Flathead River.

Determination: No significant impact.

UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Endangered and threatened species **-** *Assess whether the proposed project will impact any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants, aquatic species, or any "species of special concern," or create a barrier to the migration or movement of fish or wildlife. For groundwater, assess whether the proposed project, including impacts on adjacent surface flows, would impact any threatened or endangered species or "species of special concern."*

The Montana Natural Heritage Program website was reviewed to determine if there are any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants, aquatic species, or any "species of special concern" in Township 33N, Range 18W that could be impacted by the proposed project. 28 animal and 37 plant species of concern (Tables 1 and 2, respectively) were identified within the township and range where the project is located. Of these species, the Canada Lynx (*Lynx canadensis),* the Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos*), and the Bull Trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) are listed as threatened by the USFWS. An adequate quantity of water will still exist in the adjacent surface water sources to maintain existing populations of Bull Trout, should they exist there currently. The well has already been constructed and the property developed; any impacts to sensitive species have most likely already occurred and further significant impacts are not anticipated.

Table 1. Animal Species of Concern			
Black-backed Woodpecker (*Picoides arcticus*)	Evening Grosbeak (*Coccothraustes vespertinus*)	Little Brown Myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*)	Pygmy Whitefish (*Prosopium coulteri*)
Brown Creeper (*Certhia americana*)	Fisher (*Pekania pennanti*)	Long-eared Myotis (*Myotis evotis*)	Reticulate Taildropper (*Prophysaon andersoni*)
Bull Trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*)	Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*)	Northern Bog Lemming (*Synaptomys borealis*)	Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*)
Canada Lynx (*Lynx canadensis*)	Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch (*Leucosticte tephrocotis*)	Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*)	Western Toad (*Anaxyrus boreas*)
Cassin's Finch (*Haemorhous cassinii*)	Great Gray Owl (*Strix nebulosa*)	Northern Hawk Owl (*Surnia ulula*)	Westslope Cutthroat Trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii lewisi*)
Clark's Nutcracker (*Nucifraga columbiana*)	Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos*)	Pacific Wren (*Troglodytes pacificus*)	White-tailed Ptarmigan (*Lagopus leucura*)
Common Loon (*Gavia immer*)	Harlequin Duck (*Histrionicus histrionicus*)	Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*)	Wolverine (*Gulo gulo*)

Table 2. Plant Species of Concern			
A Peatmoss (*Sphagnum centrale*)	Giant Helleborine (*Epipactis gigantea*)	Norwegian Syntrichia Moss (*Syntrichia norvegica / Tortula norvegica*)	Stalk-leaved Monkeyflower (*Mimulus ampliatus / Mimulus patulus / Mimulus washingtonensis*)
Adder's Tongue (*Ophioglossum pusillum*)	Glaucus Beaked Sedge (*Carex rostrata*)	Pale Corydalis (*Corydalis sempervirens / Capnoides sempervirens*)	Treelike Clubmoss (*Lycopodium dendroideum / Lycopodium obscurum var. dendroideum / Dendrolycopodium dendroideum*)
Beardless Wildrye (*Elymus triticoides / Leymus triticoides*)	Heart-leaved Buttercup (*Ranunculus cardiophyllus*)	Pod Grass (*Scheuchzeria palustris*)	Tufted Club-rush (*Trichophorum cespitosum*)
Brown Hair Peatmoss / Brown Peatmoss (*Sphagnum fuscum)*	Hooded Bush Lichen (*Ramalina obtusata*)	Pustulate Tarpaper Lichen (*Collema curtisporum*)	Velvetleaf Huckleberry (*Vaccinium myrtilloides*)
Contorted Sphagnum Moss (*Sphagnum contortum*)	Kalm's Lobelia (*Lobelia kalmii*)	Red Spoon Peatmoss / Magellan's Peatmoss (*Sphagnum magellanicum*)	Warnstorfia Moss (*Sarmentypnum exannulatum / Warnstorfia exannulata*)
Creeping Sedge (*Carex chordorrhiza*)	Lanceleaf Moonwort (*Botrychium lanceolatum*)	Schleicher's Ptychostomum Moss (*Ptychostomum schlelcherl*)	Water Bulrush (*Schoenoplectus subterminalis*)
Douglas' Neckera Moss (*Neckera douglasii*)	Least Moonwort (*Botrychium simplex*)	Simple Kobresia (*Kobresia simpliciuscula*)	Whitebark Pine (*Pinus albicaulis*)
English Sundew (*Drosera anglica*)	Meadow Horsetail (*Equisetum pratense*)	Slender Cottongrass (*Eriophorum gracile*)	
Flatleaf Bladderwort (*Utricularia intermedia*)	Narrowleaf Peatmoss (*Sphagnum angustifolium*)	Slim Larkspur (*Delphinium depauperatum*)	
Floriferous Monkeyflower (*Mimulus floribundus*)	Northern Moonwort (*Botrychium pinnatum*)	Small Tofieldia (*Tofieldia pusilla*)	

Determination: No significant impact.

Wetlands **-** *Consult and assess whether the apparent wetland is a functional wetland (according to COE definitions), and whether the wetland resource would be impacted.*

Determination: N/A, project does not involve wetlands.

Ponds **-** *For ponds, consult and assess whether existing wildlife, waterfowl, or fisheries resources would be impacted.*

Determination: N/A, project does not involve ponds.

GEOLOGY/SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE - *Assess whether there will be degradation of soil quality, alteration of soil stability, or moisture content. Assess whether the soils are heavy in salts that could cause saline seep.*

It is not anticipated that the proposed domestic, lawn and garden and stock uses will have a negative impact on the soil quality, stability, or moisture content. The soils in the project area are *Pasturecreek, bouldery-Rollins-Elkridge families, complex, 2 to 15 percent slopes,* formed from volcanic ash over till derived from metasedimentary rock parent material. *Pasturecreek, bouldery-Rollins-Elkridge families, complex, 2 to 15 percent slopes*, have moderately high to high capacity to transmit water. Soils within the place of use are not likely susceptible to saline seep.

Determination: No significant impact.

VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY/NOXIOUS WEEDS - *Assess impacts to existing vegetative cover. Assess whether the proposed project would result in the establishment or spread of noxious weeds.*

It is not anticipated that issuance of a water use permit will further significantly impact existing native vegetation or contribute to the establishment or spread of noxious weeds in the project area. Noxious weed prevention and control will be the responsibility of the landowner, who must follow all applicable noxious weed regulations.

Determination: No significant impact.

AIR QUALITY - *Assess whether there will be a deterioration of air quality or adverse effects on vegetation due to increased air pollutants.*

There will be no impact to air quality associated with issuance of the proposed permit for beneficial use of groundwater.

Determination: No significant impact.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES - *Assess whether there will be degradation of unique archeological or historical sites in the vicinity of the proposed project if it is on State or Federal Lands. If it is not on State or Federal Lands simply state NA-project not located on State or Federal Lands.*

Determination: N/A, project not located on State or Federal Lands.

DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AND ENERGY - *Assess any other impacts on environmental resources of land, water, and energy not already addressed.*

All impacts to land, water, and energy have been identified and no further impacts are anticipated.

Determination: No significant impact.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS - *Assess whether the proposed project is inconsistent with any locally adopted environmental plans and goals.*

The project is consistent with planned land uses.

Determination: No significant impact.

ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES - *Assess whether the proposed project will impact access to or the quality of recreational and wilderness activities.*

The well is drilled on private property. The proposed project will not inhibit, alter, or impair access to present recreational opportunities in the area. The project is not expected to create any significant pollution, noise, or traffic congestion in the area that may alter the quality of recreational opportunities. The proposed place of use and diversion do not exist on land designated as wilderness.

Determination: No significant impact.

HUMAN HEALTH - *Assess whether the proposed project impacts human health.*

No negative impact on human health is anticipated from this proposed use.

Determination: No significant impact.

PRIVATE PROPERTY - *Assess whether there are any government regulatory impacts on private property rights.*
*Yes___ No_**X**_ If yes, analyze any alternatives considered that could reduce, minimize, or eliminate the regulation of private property rights*.

Determination: No impact.

OTHER HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES - *For routine actions of limited environmental impact, the following may be addressed in a checklist fashion.*

Impacts on:

(a) Cultural uniqueness and diversity? None identified.

(*b) Local and state tax base and tax revenues?* None identified.

(c) Existing land uses? None identified.

(*d) Quantity and distribution of employment?* None identified.

(e) Distribution and density of population and housing? None identified.

(f) Demands for government services? None identified.

(g) Industrial and commercial activity? None identified.

(h) Utilities? None identified.

(i) Transportation? None identified.

(j) Safety? None identified.

(k) *Other appropriate social and economic circumstances?* None identified.

2. *Secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical environment and human population:*

Secondary Impacts: None identified.

Cumulative Impacts: None identified.

3. *Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures:*

None.

4. *Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, including the no action alternative, if an alternative is reasonably available and prudent to consider:*

The only alternative to the proposed action would be the no action alternative. The no action alternative would not authorize the diversion of groundwater at this location.

Part III. Conclusion

1. Preferred Alternative

Issue a water use permit if the Applicant proves the criteria in 85-20-401 MCA are met.

2. Comments and Responses

None.

3. Finding:
*Yes___ No_**X**_ Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required?*

If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action:

No significant impacts related to the proposed project have been identified.

Name of person(s) responsible for preparation of EA:

Name: Travis Wilson
Title: Water Resource Specialist
Date: 20 October 2022